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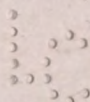


# Lariat Letters



BY

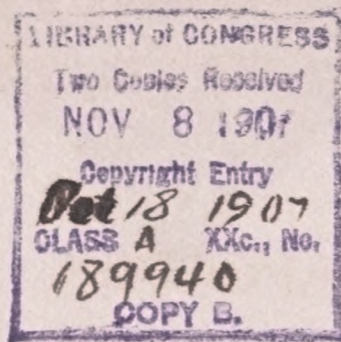
MYRA E. McDERMOTT-STEVENSON



Illustrated by  
Zella Bey Mains



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MYRA E. McDERMOTT-STEVENSON

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## APOLOGY.

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**A** round-up of a few mavericks, gathered for the benefit of my cowboy friends, and to recall the old days, when Liberal was the end of the railroad and the beginning of the world.

“Arizona.”





"A BARKIS ON THE RANGE."



## A BARKIS ON THE RANGE.

His Lively Response to a "Matrimonial"  
Advertisement.

A Kansas City girl who put a "matrimonial" advertisement in *The Star* is probably still wondering over the following letter, which reached her a few days later:

"LIBERAL, KAS., Oct. 29.—*My Dear Young Woman*: I had just finished rounding up the market reports in *The Star* to-day, when I caught your brand in the personal column, and as I'm just about the swiftest thing that comes down the pike, I made up my mind right away that you're just the maverick I want to get my rope on; so if you want to be queen of my heart and eighteen hundred head of the best white-faced cattle in this neck of the woods, just send the old man a line, and we'll be running our herd on



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*LARIAT LETTERS.*

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"RIDING CLOTHESPIN FASHION."



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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the same range quicker'n a bucking broncho can pitch a cowboy into the middle of next week.

“Before you put your sig. onto that letter you're a-going to write me, just tell me all about yourself, whether you're a straight blueblood or just a common dogie, and if you ride a leaping horn saddle or have got onto that new-fangled way some of the city girls have of *riding clothespin fashion*. I wouldn't object, exactly, if you do ride that-a-way, but if you'd just as soon not, I'll get you the best buckskin side-saddle in the market, with lots of gingerbread on the tapideros and silver jingle-bobs all over it.

“If you want to know anything about me, just write to Kilgore & Hays, Liberal, and if they don't tell you I'm a straight fellow and have the best ranch in the Panhandle and *can ride the meanest broncho* and rope



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*LARIAT LETTERS.*

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"CAN RIDE THE MEANEST BRONCHO."



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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more steers than any fellow on the range, I'll eat my sombrero,—and it's a hand-made Mexican one, that weighs eight pounds and cost fourteen dollars.

“Hope you won't get on the prod at this letter, for I never was much at slinging words and always fought shy of the girls, and as I never wrote a love-letter in my life and never sign anything but checks, you'll have to counter-brand anything you don't like in this letter. I am a-goin' to send my face along with this, so you can see what kind of a looker I am, and hope it'll suit you. Return the comp., can't you?

“Well, I'll have to rope off or some fellow will be shooting holes in me for runnin' on his range. Hope to get that letter by next mail. Yours—if you'll have me—.”

ARIZONA.



## A COW-PUNCHER IN KANSAS CITY.

(As told by himself.)

“Talk about your being lonesome,” said Sport Porter as he came on second guard the other night, when we were holding the cattle in Rattlesnake Cañon, “the lonesomest place I ever struck in my life was in a big hotel in Kansas City. No, it wasn’t before it was opened up, either. The d—d thing was in full blast, but as for being lonesome,—well, it could give a dog town in the west end cards and spades and be ahead at the end of the game. You see it was this way: I went down there with a train-load of yearlin’s, and hit the town Monday morning. Now you all know I never was in a town bigger’n Amarillo before, and when I struck that hullabaloo of K. C., U. S. A., as I hear it called, I knew



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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right away that a knock-kneed dogie calf in a herd of two thousand thoroughbreds was a king bee compared to your humble servant mixed up with that city herd. I drifted around awhile, afraid to ask any questions, for fear I'd run up against a confidence man, for I'd heard all about their smooth game with just such mavericks as me, and I didn't intend to get roped in on no such graft if I could help it. I had a pretty big roll with me, too, so I thought I'd go to a bang-up hotel where I would feel safer than in a cheap corral. Well, I found a policeman—a star-brand fellow—and asked him about it, and he sent me to a hotel called the Midland; said it was one of the best in the city. I said that was what I wanted. I found the place all right, sailed in trying to look wise, and the next thing I knew them *damned high-heeled boots of mine*



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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"THEM HIGH-HEELED BOOTS OF MINE SLID OUT FROM UNDER ME AND I CAME DOWN ON THAT BLAMED MARBLE FLOOR."



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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*slid out from under me and I came down on that blamed marble floor and saw stars and nigger porters in brass-band clothes all mixed up for about half a minute. I got up out of that some way, though, and a coon helped me find the desk where you have to put down your brand and range, so if you blow out the gas and kick the bucket they can write to the old folks about it. They asked me if I wanted a room, and I said I did, and another coon took me up in one of them flyin' machines called an elevator, for about a thousand feet, and showed me into a room big enough to rope a steer in and furnished like a parlor, and left me there. Well, I sat down, and there I sat. I never was as lonesome in all my life. I got up and looked out the window, and I know it was a mile to the ground. The floors up there were all padded like the inside of an insane*



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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asylum, and you couldn't hear people hoofing it in the halls. I would have been glad right then to have heard a coyote howl. Finally I decided to go downstairs, but I didn't want to be dropped down in a velvet-lined box like I came up in, so I thought I'd sneak out and find the stairs, for there must be some somewhere. I know I chased myself around ten miles of hall carpet before I give it up and thought I'd go back to my room, and then I walked another ten looking for that blamed room, and I never did find it. They all looked as much alike as a lot of soapweeds on a Kansas flat, and I was certainly up against it until I ran onto a room with the door open, and saw a girl in there making beds. I fished out a dollar and handed it to her and said, 'That plunk's yours, young woman, if you'll kindly show me the stairs of this she-



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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bang,' and she grinned and towed me around one or two blocks of hall, and showed me a stairs wide enough to drive a herd of bronchos down. Well, I went down, and down, and down for about an hour, and finally came to what I supposed was the bottom. At least I didn't see any more stairs, but I didn't see much of anything else either, but some swinging doors, so I made a go for one of them, and darned if I didn't bring up in the kitchen or some such place, and all the coons in Kansas City must have been right there, and they made a stampede straight for me. I guess they thought I was some kind of a freak. I guess I wasn't much else, either. Well, I got out of that place, fell down on some more tombstone floor, saw some more doors and made a break for them, and found I was in the bar-room. I took a Texas straight,



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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"IF THAT NIGGER DIDN'T GIVE ME MY OWN HAT."



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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to act like I knew where I was at, went out on the other side, milled around some more looking for a way out, found a big glass door, went in, and found myself in the bar-room again. I drank another straight, although I didn't want to get even a little bit locoed, for I was bad enough off sober, and got out again into an entirely different part of the house, or so it seemed to me. I hurried around there, for I was getting hungry and wanted to find the chuck-room, went through the first door I came to, and ran up against that bar again. I know that bar-room had five hundred doors to it, and every hall in the house seemed to lead to one of them. The W. C. T. U. really ought to take it up. I bought loco pot, which I didn't drink, and asked the barkeeper if he could tell me where the dining-room was. I showed him a coin and he



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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called a boy with more band clothes on, and had him show me the way, and darned if that dining-room wasn't at the very top of the house. A coon at the door reached out and grabbed my sombrero before I could say 'Jack Robinson' and hung it on a peg back of him. I never said a word to him, but to myself I said, 'Good-bye, hat,' for I thought sure that would be the last of that \$14 lid of mine, and it was a real hand-made Mexican, too, and had a rattlesnake band with 14 rattles on it around the crown. You could have corralled all the cattle in the Pan-handle in that dining-room and had room to burn. An off-color nigger in a bob-tailed coat showed me to a table, and another coon who was almost a whiteface came up with a card with a lot of lingo on it that I couldn't make out a word of, folded his arms and stood there like a prairie-dog on his



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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hole. I looked at that card and then at the nigger, hauled out a half and said, 'Now you know what I want to eat. Just bring it in,' and he did, and I'll say right here that was a bang-up dinner and no mistake, and if ever you're riding the chuck line in Kansas City you know where to go.

After I had fed my face all I wanted to, I drifted out again,—and what do you think? If that nigger didn't give me MY OWN HAT! It's a nice place all right, but I never got onto the ropes there, and it always took a nigger to get me cut out from every herd I got into, and I was blamed near broke when I got off that range. I believe I do better on native pasture."



## A COW-PUNCHER AT A BULL FIGHT.

CITY OF MEXICO, Sunday night.—  
DEAR BILL:—Jake took a fool notion to gallop down here and spend Sunday, so we loaded into a Mexican Central train and landed here at noon today. We didn't know exactly what to do to kill time, but we learned there was to be the biggest bull fight of the season this afternoon. So we decided to take it in. Well, the bull-pen looked like a one-ring circus, only the seats go all around and are closer and higher and there's a mighty tight fence around the corral where the bulls do their turn. We got there early and it was fun to watch the people coming in droves like hungry calves after a feed-wagon. I'll tell you there were lots of thoroughbreds in the bunch, too—and dress! Say, they all looked as



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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if it was their day off, and had on more jinglebobs and fixin's than I ever saw before. The women are good lookers, too, if they do paint their faces up like Apaches on the warpath.

Pretty soon a band came out in the corral and played "Good Morning, Carrie," and the whitefaces all yelled themselves hoarse. Old man Diaz and his party were chucked into a kind of pigeonhole with red curtains around it up at the top of the seats on one side, and everybody let out a yell when he showed up. He came to the front of his box and bowed a few lines, and then things began to happen. First a big gate in the pen opposite the old man's grandstand opened up and a fellow on the prettiest horse you ever saw came riding out. That horse had on more clothes than any bronk I ever saw, and they seemed to be mostly big satin and velvet flappy



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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things with gold lace all over them. The fellow on him looked like the ringmaster in a circus. He made that horse walk mostly on its hind legs clear across the corral, and then stopped just below the old man and took off his hat and bowed and made the horse bow, and then he made a speech which meant in English that if it was all right with the old man the next thing on the programme would be something else, and if he would cough up the key to the bullpen things would happen "poco tiempo." The old man said it was "Muy buen," and threw down the key.

About twenty brass bands broke loose at once, and after a little cheering the gates were opened again and the whole outfit came in and milled around a little while to show off. There were the three chief guys who do the killing and about a dozen



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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"caballeros" in fancy togs with red capes over their arms and a lot of common fellows who do the clean-up act after a killing, and six mules with satin covers and gold-mounted harness hitched to a kind of drag. A dozen or so fellows on horses and armed with overgrown prod-poles came in, too. The crowd threw another fit, and the gang all went out except the fellows with the bareback-rider clothes on, and some horsemen.

Then the gate on the other side of the pen flew open and out came the bull, and he was sure a fine animal, but too heavy to be much of a sprinter. He had a kind of dagger with red and blue ribbons tied to it stuck in his shoulder and the blood was running down. He was sure on the prod. He pawed the ground up and bellowed like winter thunder. Some of the fighters made a few flips with their



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*LARIAT LETTERS.*

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"AND OUT CAME THE BULL."



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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satin capes, and he sure stampeded them in a hurry. Those boys can jump a seven-foot fence to beat a Texas steer. Finally the bull got his eye on one of the horses and made a dive for him, and as the horses are always blindfolded and broken down anyway, they don't have much show. The fellow with the prod-pole makes a bluff at keeping the bull off, but I noticed he nearly always failed about the second time and that bronk's day was over right there. Whenever a horse is killed the crowd yells like mad, the mules are brought in, drag him out, and the next horse has a chance—to end his troubles.

After this has kept up until everybody from the States is sick of it, the old man gives some kind of a signal, which means that enough horses have been killed to last a spell, and they are taken out. The fellows with the



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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"banderillos" have their inning. Each man has two sticks each about two feet long and covered with paper lace and flowers and ribbons and with a kind of spike on one end, and he waits until the bull gets real mad and makes a dive for the cape somewhere. Then he runs square at him, and just as he reaches him steps to the left a little, leans over and throws the spike ends of his sticks into the bull's shoulders just back of the head. Then he gives them a good dig and makes for the fence. If they both stick, the crowd yells like mad, and if they don't they give him the horse-laugh. They keep this banderillo business up until they have eight of them stuck in the bull's shoulders and blood runs down both sides to the ground, or until the old man gives a sig. to stop. Then everybody holds his breath while the mator does his turn.



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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The fellows with the capes keep yelling and waving their rags until the bull is too rattled to know whom to run at first, and is so out of wind by this time that he don't care much anyway. But he makes a few more charges and unexpectedly meets the matador, who holds a red flag in his left hand and a long narrow sword in his right, and as he charges, steps to the left, leans over and strikes his sword in the shoulder just in front of the banderillos, and if he is a good man, usually sinks it to the handle, and the bull is a goner. Then you would sure think hades had broken loose, for the crowd gets locoed again and yells and throws everything loose to the man who did the killing. We stayed until four bulls and eight horses had passed in their checks, and left, although the doin's was just half over.



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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“IF THEY BOTH STICK THE CROWD YELLS LIKE MAD.”



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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As a general summing-up of the affair, I can only say it's mighty dangerous for the horses and fatal for the bull, and I'd just like to see them fellows fight a little Texas cow that had lost her calf. I'll bet there would be more cow than Greaser left when the killing came.

When we get back to the Panhandle I'll tell you all about our trip. I must hike out now and round up Jake before some señorita gets her rope on him for a maverick. Yours for U. S. A.  
ARIZONA.



## STEERING STEERS IN K. C.

HOTEL BALTIMORE,

KANSAS CITY, Mo., Jan. 28, 1902.

DEAR JACK:—The steers came through all right and struck a fair market, but you'll see all that in *The Star*, so I won't waste any time telling you about it; but I want to give you a little spiel about the bang-up time Bill and I have had since we struck town. After the cattle sold so well we made up our minds to go the whole thing, and we sure struck the proper gait when we landed at this hotel, for you can cut a wider swath here than in any hash-mill I ever run up against before. And cost! Gee whiz! you can make the profits on eighteen cars of whitefaces look like thirty cents here in less than a week. But I'm not kicking—it's worth every darn cent of it.



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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Bill didn't open his face for exactly fourteen minutes after we broke in here, and then he gave the kind of a look a bad steer gives you just after he has been throwed the first time, and whispered: "Say, Arizona, have I died and gone to heaven, or is this a hotel?" You see we had gone to this particular house because it's named after the city Bill's mother came from back East, but you wouldn't think it to look at Bill, now, would you? He don't look exactly like a Maryland product, does he?

We struck our first snag when the kid who seemed to me to be dressed mostly in buttons steered us up to a sort of bank counter with a lot of post-office boxes on the wall back of it, and delivered us to a 200-pound fellow, who looked like he might own the X I T Ranch and Armour's packing-house and never miss the change.



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*LARIAT LETTERS.*

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“DRESSED MOSTLY IN BRASS BUTTONS.”

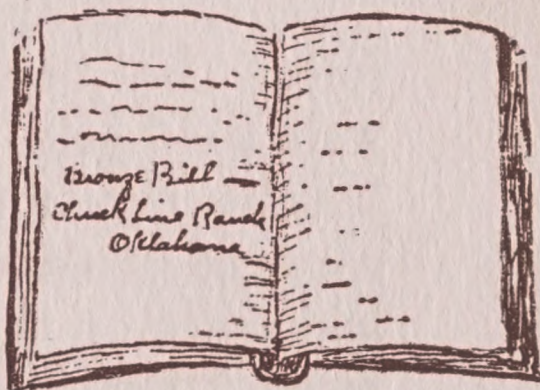


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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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Well, this fellow—for he turned out to be a good fellow all right—pushed a big brand-book towards us, dipped a pen in the ink and handed it first to Bill, who turned kinder pale and looked at me in a kind of up-against-it way until I gave him a dig in the ribs with my elbow, when he sort o' tumbled, and then he turned to that book, and I'll be darned if he didn't write in letters you could read the length of a lariat-rope, "Bronco Bill, Chuck Line Ranch, Oklahoma." I followed suit with my Sunday name, which I hardly knew myself, when it was done, and then the fellow whirled the book round, looked a little while at Bill's brand, coughed once or twice, and said politely:



"American or European?"



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## *LARIAT LETTERS.*

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“Liberal, Kan., U. S. A., and we want the best rooms in the house.”

I snorted, for I didn't much like being taken for a blamed foreigner of some kind, and the fellow took a couple of keys, turned them and us over to another button sign, and off we went, up the elevator a few floors (we didn't break loose then, thank the Lord), and into a parlor (think of that, will you), with a bedroom on each side and two dipping-pens with big china dishes to waller in, and more windows and things than I ever saw before. The bunks looked like they were solid gold, and I half wished I'd bought my hot roll along when it came to bunkin', for I felt like I had laid down on the cat in the hammock when I got into it that night. But I soon got used to the swing of the thing, and dreamed I was ridin' "Sky Scraper" to the moon, when I went



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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dead. The kid was pretty nice about puttin' us on to the bell signals and silver hydrants and such jingle-bobs, so Bill loosened up a dollar and threw to him as he left, with the remark: "Here, kid, get you some more buttons," and the grin he sent back was worth it.



We didn't have any more trouble till chuck-time, (dinner was so late that day that they didn't have any supper, I noticed. I guess the cook must have been on the prod,) and then another plunk had the waiter—he was a regular polangus, no off color about him—coming our way, and we roped in all the chuck we wanted without having to read the darned French program, which was all Choc-taw to me. That was a square meal all right, I tell you, and worth all it cost. After it was over we wandered



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## *LARIAT LETTERS.*

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“SAW A FEW THINGS THAT MADE OUR EYES  
STICK OUT.”



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## *LARIAT LETTERS.*

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down into the cellar, where they have the swellest bar you ever saw, and sampled a few fancy slings that made me feel like a bucking broncho after an oat feed.

That night we drifted into a play-house and saw a few things that made our eyes stick out; but I can't tell you all about that now. When we get back on our own range I'll give you the whole thing.

I must round up the market now and see if the train of calves is in. If we stay here much longer I won't be able to cut out Bill from that hotel herd at all, he's getting so stuck on the brand and the whole ranch. Yours till branding-time, ARIZONA.





"THE BRAVEST AND TRUEST LITTLE PARTNER ON EARTH."



## THE COWMAN'S IDEAL GIRL.

He Describes Her in Detail, and in Terms to Suit.

A preacher at Liberal, Kas., down in the short-grass country, recently preached a sermon on "The Ideal Young Woman," and asked the young men of the community to furnish short written descriptions of their conceptions of the "Ideal." The following letter is one that did not appear on the programme. (*K. C. Star.*)

"My ideal young woman is a native. She is a well-graded one, too, but not a thoroughbred—they take too much care and are not good rustlers when range is short. She is pretty enough to make some honest cowman lose his heart to her and make her queen of his herd, if she'll have him, but she isn't such a looker that every chuck-line riding cow-puncher in the country will want to hang around the old man's



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## *LARIAT LETTERS.*

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ranch till he's fired. She may not have been raised in the saddle, but she knows enough to tell a latigo strap from a branding-iron, and is the kind of a girl that can get on a good broncho and hold the cut-out herd in a round-up when your extra cowboy goes back on you at the last minute. She's got all the book-learning she needs, but she doesn't go around talking dead languages while the biscuits burn, nor let the chickens scratch up a good garden while she makes experiments in botany. She knows how to talk, and does a good deal of it, but you don't have to put a jerk-line on her to get in a spiel yourself sometimes. She doesn't get locoed at the sight of a cook-stove, and can give an old-time camp cook tips on sour doughs. It don't take lariats and hobbles to keep her at home part of the time, and she don't get on the prod every time any-



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## *LARIAT LETTERS.*

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thing goes wrong on the ranch. She dresses as well as she can put up for, but she don't blow in every cent she can get hold of for jingle-bobs and other fixings, and she don't spend two hours, when somebody is in a hurry to get started somewhere, doing her hair up to look like a water spaniel that's been through a cactus patch. In fact, she's all right, and we love her, and look up to her, and lose our hearts to her and let her make any old kind of fools of us, and we put in our lives making money for her to spend—and we're glad to do it. She is our own home-grown girl, and we are proud of her and wouldn't exchange for any other kind on earth. She helps us enjoy life when we can, and when the other kind of times come she is the bravest and truest little partner on earth, and we reverence her more than ever. More than that,



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## LARIAT LETTERS.

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she's right here, and we don't have to go off our own range to find just the one we want. Every cowboy in the country knows just where to find one that tops the market in all these points—and may his claim never be contested! Yours for Western girls,"  
ARIZONA.



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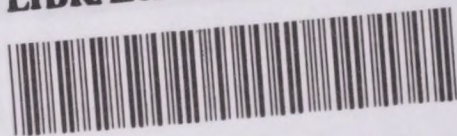
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